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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

July 1, 2020

What does July 4th mean this year?

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but the spirit of power, of courage and resolution, to meet difficulties and dangers; the spirit of love which will carry us through opposition.” (2 Timothy 1:7)

July 4th feels different for me this year. Rather than celebrating an event in the past, it seems we have the opportunity to recognize and create a “re-start.” Sometimes I forget that what July 4th historically did was set our nation on a journey with hopes and dreams to be realized. However, the journey was never completed, but rather still continues.

These past few months have taught us many things about ourselves as a society and as individuals. COVID-19 has shown us how vulnerable we are; how challenging it is to focus on the “common good” verses our own individual liberties; and the inequities of communities where some are suffering much more than others. We have also had the harsh realities of racism made even more visible.

But challenging times also provide opportunities for new learnings and new responses. Churches have discovered new ways to be the church without relying on a building for focus. We have discovered that the environment is healthier when our daily lives do not produce as much pollution. We realize how important our physical human interactions are. Yet we have also discovered that technology can provide ways to deepen our connections and understandings, while allowing us to be more aware of the realities of others.



Approaching July 4th, I am hopeful for a renewed push that will help us build a country based on the values that we see in the Declaration of Independence – “ We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men (people) are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

To celebrate July 4th, not only means celebrating these foundational words, but also a commitment to create a country that reflects them: acknowledging the wrongs of the past and making the changes that allow us to work diligently toward creating something new. Of course, this is not just for our country, but for our global world in which we live together.

May the Spirit of love and courage carry us forward through the uncertainties and the opposition so that we might reflect the hope of our Creator.

Blessings, Char Burch
Transitional Conference Minister

News from the Conference Office

Lay Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times – An SEC Special Webinar on July 20

What kind of pressures are you as lay leaders experiencing? How do you work to make good decisions in today's virtual world? How do you support your pastor? We are living in challenging times and as lay leaders, your leadership is crucial. These days you may feel greater pressures of finances, moving to in-person worship, responding to individual complaints without the advantage of face-to-face meetings.

Moderators and other Lay Leaders are encouraged to join Rev. Char Burch (Transitional Conference Minister), for an hour of discussion on leadership during these unique times. 7 pm Eastern/6 pm Central. [Register for the Zoom session here.](#)

What Gives You Hope? Submit Your Video Reflection!

We are living in some challenging times. But we are called to be a people of hope. So the midst of our current life, what do you see that gives you hope?

You are invited to create a 30-45 second video and send it to Don Harris, our Conference Communications Director. We will include videos in our upcoming Conference Connections as a reminder that because of our faith, we are people of hope.

Send your videos to communicationsdirector@secucc.org, text them to Don at 404-964-2474, or share a link to your Google Drive or OneDrive. We look forward to your contributions!

Energizing Democracy – July 28

by Michael Malcom

In a recent sermon, Rev Jennifer Sanders of Beloved UCC preached about things rising from the ashes. Although these are tense and uncertain times, many of us are either raising or finding our voice for justice. Some of us have even seen justice ministry emerge from the ashes. We are taking stances against "othering" and stating emphatically that black lives matter.

I commend those who have seen placing your bodies on the line as a sacred rite. I'd like to invite you all to view injustice through an environmental justice lens. Join us on July 28 at 7 pm Eastern/6 pm Central as we discuss environmental racism and its effect on the church. [Register today for Energizing Democracy.](#)

Southeast Conference Annual Meeting – September 26, 2020

Because of the concern about COVID-19, the Board of Directors has decided to move the September Annual Meeting to a virtual event. Hold the date! More details to follow!



The Conference-Wide Unity Worship Service is available on the SEC Website

THANK YOU to everyone who participated in the June 20 worship service! It was a wonderful opportunity to appreciate the gifts that various people and congregations bring to the Southeast Conference. If you missed it, the [recording is on our Conference website](#). Feel free to share it with your congregation! If you would like a particular segment for sharing in your own worship service, please [email Rev. Heather Fosburgh](#).

From the Generosity Coordinator

by Min. Carrole Moss

Greetings all, hopefully we are ALL staying safe, sheltering in, wearing masks, washing our hands, and following the guidelines of the CDC. According to our health officials, this Pandemic will be with us for a while. Numbers are rising in many states, and there seems to be no cure in sight.

As we embrace this Pandemic, we remain a nation divided. We are divided Culturally, Politically, and Racially. Even our churches seem to be divided. YOU be the CHANGE!!!

Many of our problems could be solved if WE, as people of God could come



together and recognize that we are ALL children of the Most High God. It all starts with YOU! These Pandemics have crippled the Nation. It has left many feeling alone, isolated and frustrated. Though some of us are tempted to "THROW IN THE TOWEL", please be encouraged that God is in the midst of all that is going on. Although it seems bleak at times, please remember that God always has a plan and will go before us and meet us on the other side.

In the words of Frederick Douglas: "For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind and the earthquake! The feelings of the nation must be quickened, the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed and its' crimes against GOD and man must be proclaimed and denounced."

Keep protesting, **PEACEFULLY**, Let's continue to let our voices be heard, to educate the people of God, and correct all of the injustices that have been endured for decades.

The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776 states: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that ALL men/women are created equal, that they are endowed by their CREATOR with certain unalienable RIGHTS, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Thank you all for all the ways that you continue to support the Southeast Conference United Church of Christ. Your contributions and support are so appreciated. Hopefully we can be together again soon, in the meantime, we are learning to become tech savvy in our worship services.

Should you have questions or concerns during these Pandemics, please feel free to reach out to me directly.

Although our physical buildings are closed, remember, **WE ARE THE CHURCH!!**

Peace and blessings as we continue this journey, **TOGETHER**,

For All Clergy

- **An Hour of Conversations and Prayer**

Tuesdays in July (7, 14, 21, 28) - 11:00 a.m. Eastern (10:00 a.m. Central)

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/479440102>

- **Live Harp Meditations for Ministers**

Thursday, July 23: 1:00 p.m. Eastern (12:00 Central)

20 minutes of meditation with Celtic harp. Silent prayer and reflection

following if desired, facilitated by Rev. Jean Norton. (For questions or to sign up for individual Therapeutic Harp Sessions, contact Jean at HeartSongJean@gmail.com.)

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/96976838422>

- **Especially for Specialized Ministers**

Tuesday, July 28: 9:30 a.m. Eastern (8:30 a.m. Central)

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/354744689>

Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation Continues for all Church Leaders

As situations regarding COVID-19 keep changing, moderators and church leaders are invited to join in the continued conversation about when and how church buildings re-open and in-person worship resumes. Everyone is welcome to join the conversation.

Join us on **Monday, July 13 at 7:00 pm Eastern / 6:00 pm Central** via Zoom. [Register online here](#).

Sermon Ideas for Clergy

Clergy, do you need a break from sermon preparation? Since many of our pastors are recording sermons, contact each other to share sermons! Or use a segment from one of the many videos being shared through webinars. If you're not already on our Southeast Conference [Clergy and Laity Facebook group](#), join and share ideas there!



Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2020. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of July 4

- Brookemeade Congregational UCC; Nashville, Tennessee
- Patricia Hough
- Courtney Jones
- David Templeton Jr

Week of July 11

- First Congregational UCC; Birmingham, Alabama
- D. Houston Hall
- Shelli Poe
- Phillip Price
- Paige Pearson Wimberly

Churches in Transition

Central Congregational, Atlanta, GA; First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Open Table, Mobile AL; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; United Church of Cookeville, Cookeville TN

News from the Wider Church



Three Great Loves: Stewardship Materials for 2020

The United Church of Christ Stewardship materials are perfect for your summer or fall financial enlistment campaign.

Three Great Loves expresses the core commitments of the United Church of Christ as we live out Jesus' call to share God's love. Across our Christian movement, we embody God's love in three ways:

- Love of Children
- Love of Neighbor
- Love of Creation

[Read more about these new stewardship materials.](#)

Thursdays for the Soul

Voces, Oraciones y Canciones de la Frontera / Voices, Prayers and Songs from the Border – July 2

United Church of Christ Pastoral Leaders reflect, pray, and sing of their bicultural/bilingual rootedness as people from the Mexican/U.S. border. A spiritual celebration of tradition and hope that transcends time and perseveres today.

Thursdays for the Soul: A webinar series to care for the whole church. Topics are wide ranging, and are focused on the spirituality and care of people.

July 02, 2020 at 3:30pm - 4:30pm EST; [Register Online](#)

News from our Local Congregations

Ecclesiastical Council of Rev. Richard Barham

The Southeast Conference's Commission on Ministry invites you to the Ecclesiastical Council of Rev. Richard Barham, Senior Pastor of Spirit of the Cross UCC in Huntsville, AL. Ecclesiastical Councils (ECs) are the last step in the process for both Members in Discernment and for Ministers transferring their credentials to the United Church of Christ from another denomination called the Privilege of Call. As part of the EC, Southeast Conference members will have the opportunity to hear about Rev. Barham's ministry and call to the United Church of Christ.



As part of the EC, you, members of the Southeast Conference, will have the opportunity to listen to the work of the Spirit, and vote to welcome Rev. Barham into the UCC as a fully authorized ordained minister. Rev. Barham currently serves as Senior Pastor of Spirit of the Cross UCC in Huntsville, AL, a congregation that affiliated with the UCC in October 2018. This EC will be online and you can [register here](#) to attend on August 4th at 6 pm Eastern, 5 pm Central.

Midweek Musical Meditation

First Congregational Church UCC Atlanta proudly presents "A Midweek Musical Meditation" with organist Trey Clegg on Wednesdays at noon. You can go to one of First Church's social media platforms for this delightful opportunity. [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), Live Stream [firstchurchatl.org](#).

UCC Member Named Director of Diversity at Museum

First Congregational UCC, Birmingham, AL is delighted to share that one of their members, Dr. Emily G. Hanna has been named by the Birmingham Museum of Art as its first Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. She previously served as the Senior Curator of Arts of Africa and the Americas. Congratulations!



Training and Learning Opportunities



John Lewis: Good Trouble

Buy a \$12 ticket to stream a compelling new film on the life and work of Georgia congressman and civil rights activist John Lewis, and \$5 goes to support UCC justice ministries. [Access the movie on-demand here.](#)

Register now for SC2ER Summer Institute – July 8

The United Church of Christ has a long history of working toward addressing systemic and institutional racism. In 2003 General Synod 24 adopted a resolution calling for the UCC to be an anti-racist church, stating that "racism is rooted in a belief of the superiority of whiteness and bestows benefits, unearned rights, rewards, opportunities, advantages, access, and privilege on Europeans and European descendants.

In 2018 Sacred Conversations to End Racism (SC2ER), a Restorative Racial

Justice Journey study guide, was created to address and dismantle racism within the Christian Church and society. The study guide and accompanying resources debunks and corrects myths that claim Europeans and Anglo Saxons are a dominant culture.

Participants on the SC2ER journey:

1. Explore relevant and practical ways to have conversations that are inclusive of diverse cultures and ethnic identities
2. Engage with biblical texts regarding equitable treatment of all God's people
3. Gain an understanding of the historical and contemporary myths associated with race
4. Participate in active listening and response techniques
5. Learn inclusive non-colonial terms for people groups
6. Develop strategies to move from conversations to advocacy and activism

Register and become part of a listening and learning community. Commit to gathering via Zoom video conference for five sessions Wednesdays, from 6-7:30 p.m. ET, between July 8 and Aug. 5, and learn best practices towards dismantling racism. [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

Mediation Skills, Conflict Transformation, and more

Please join the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center for one of the many events that they have planned from July through December of this year, including traditional events that we haven't presented for a while, as well as brand new webinars on timely topics. A sampling of a few imminent events is listed below (some events will be repeated in future months).

- *Meditation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders* (August 3-7, 2020): This intensive 5-day event helps clergy and other church leaders deal more effectively with interpersonal, congregational, and other forms of group conflict.
- *Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches* (July 18): Sessions include "Finding Renewal in Conflict" and "How to be Effective when People are Angry," among others. Groups are especially encouraged to register for this event!
- *Healthy Congregations* (July 21): Participants will learn how to keep anxiety within their congregations from becoming infectious, put limits on invasive behavior, manage reactivity, focus on strengths, and more! This workshop is also especially well suited for groups who are

- members of the same congregation.
- *Breaking Free: Finding Resilience in an Era of Collective Trauma* (July 16 and July 30): Grounded in Family Systems Theory, and offered in the context of COVID-19 and the aftermath of George Floyd's tragic death, *Breaking Free* will help participants identify the impact of trauma on themselves and others, discuss strategies to break free from trauma, and find resilience.

Further details and registration information for these events and others will be made available on [BrownPaperTickets](#) (some events still pending). Visit <https://lmpeacecenter.org/> for the latest updates or call 630-627-0507, or email Admin@LMPeaceCenter.org.

Conference Calendar

Clergy Conversations via Zoom

Tuesday, July 7 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT ([Click here to join](#))

Board of Directors Meeting

July 9 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT

Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders

Monday, July 13 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT ([Register online here](#))

Clergy Conversations via Zoom

Tuesday, July 14 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT ([Click here to join](#))

Middle TN Clergy Gathering

July 16 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm EDT
([Click here to join](#))

Lay Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times

July 20 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT
([Click here to join](#))

Clergy Conversations via Zoom

Tuesday, July 21 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT ([Click here to join](#))

PAM Team Meeting

July 21 @ 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm EDT

Live Harp Meditations for Ministers

Thursday, July 23 @ 1:00 pm EDT (<https://zoom.us/j/96976838422>)

Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders

Monday, July 27 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT ([Register online here](#))

Zoom Conversation for Specialized Ministers

Tuesday, July 28 @ 9:30 am - 11:00 am EDT (<https://zoom.us/j/354744689>)

Clergy Conversations via Zoom

Tuesday, July 28 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT ([Click here to join](#))

Environmental Justice Conversation

July 28 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT

([Click here to join](#))

View the **full calendar** of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>

Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Char Burch**; cburch@secucc.org

Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh**; hfosburgh@secucc.org

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss**; cmoss@secucc.org

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